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ABSTRACT

A framework is presented for Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) education in elementary and secondary schools. The objective is to enable students to understand the nature of the AIDS epidemic and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to maintain behaviors that eliminate risk of infection. The plan was developed by the New Plymouth (Idaho) school district, a diverse yet conservative community. Broad local participation was solicited to ensure consistency with parental and community values. The document includes sections on: (1) planning and implementing effective school health education about HIV/AIDS; (2) qualifications of teachers at the elementary and secondary levels; (3) the purposes of effective education about HIV/AIDS; and (4) program content categorized in four grade-level ranges--early elementary, late elementary, middle, and senior high school. An epilogue reviews behaviors to be acquired in the program and emphasizes the need for accurate information, appropriate attitudes, and direct action as necessary curriculum components. Two brief paragraphs on curriculum selection and ways of keeping parents informed conclude the document. (LL)

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THE NEW PLYMOUTH FRAMEWORK FOR HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

Developed by the New Plymouth School District, New Plymouth, ID 83655

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THE NEW PLYMOUTH FRAMEWORK FOR HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

Planning and Implementing Effective School Health Education About HIV/AIDS

The Nation's public and private schools have the capacity and responsibility to help assure that young people understand the nature of the AIDS epidemic and the specific actions they can take to prevent HIV infection, especially during their adolescence and young adulthood. The specific scope and contents of HIV/AIDS education in schools should be locally determined and should be consistent with parental and community values.

Because AIDS is a fatal disease and because educating young people about becoming infected through sexual contact can be controversial, school systems should obtain broad community participation to ensure that school health education policies and programs to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS infection are locally determined and are consistent with community values.

HIV/AIDS education programs should be developed to address the needs and the developmental levels of students and to address the specific needs of minorities, and persons with visual or hearing impairments or other learning disabilities. Plans for addressing students' questions or concerns about HIV/AIDS at the early elementary grades, as well as for providing effective school health education about HIV/AIDS at each grade from late elementary/middle school through junior high/senior high school, including educational materials to be used, should be reviewed by representatives of the school board, appropriate school administrators, teachers, and parents before being implemented.

Education about HIV/AIDS may be most appropriate and effective when carried out within a more comprehensive school health education program that establishes a foundation for understanding the relationships between personal behavior and health. For example, education about HIV/AIDS may be more effective when students at appropriate ages are more knowledgeable about sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, and community health. It may also have a greater impact when they have opportunities to develop such qualities as decision-making and communication skills, resistance to persuasion, and a sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Programs Taught By Qualified Teachers

In the elementary grades, students generally have one regular classroom teacher. In these grades, education about HIV/AIDS should be provided by the regular classroom teacher, with the school nurse as a resource, because those persons ideally should be trained and experienced in child development, age-appropriate teaching methods, child health, and elementary health education methods and materials. In addition, the elementary teacher usually is sensitive to normal variations in child development and aptitudes within a class. In the secondary grades, the secondary school health education teacher preferably should provide education about HIV/AIDS, becuase a qualified health education teacher will have training and experience in adolescent development, age-appropriate teaching methods, adolescent health, and secondary school health education methods and materials (including methods and materials for teaching about such topics as human sexuality, communicable diseases, and drug abuse).

Purpose of Effective Education About HIV/AIDS

The principal purpose of education about HIV/AIDS' is to prevent HIV infection. The content of HIV/AIDS education should be developed with the active involvement of parents. Educational programs should assure that young people acquire

the knowledge and skills they will need to adopt and maintain types of behavior that virtually eliminate their risk of becoming infected.

School systems should make programs available that will enable and encourage young people who have not engaged in sexual intercourse and who have not used illicit drugs to continue to -

- abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage
- refrain from using or injecting illicit drugs.

For young people who have engaged in sexual intercourse or who have used illicit drugs, school programs should encourage them to -

- stop engaging in sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage
- to stop using or injecting illicit drugs.

Despite all efforts, some young people may remain unwilling to adopt behavior that would virtually eliminate their risk of becoming infected. Therefore, school systems, in consultation with parents and health officials should provide HIV/AIDS education programs, on an individual counseling basis, that address preventive types of behavior that should be practiced by persons with an increased risk of acquiring HIV infection. These include:

- avoiding sexual intercourse with anyone who is known to be infected, who is at risk of being infected, or whose HIV infection status is not known
- using a latex condom with spermicide if they engage in sexual intercourse
- seeking treatment if addicted to illicit drugs
- not sharing needles or other injection equipment
- seeking HIV counseling and testing if HIV infection is suspected.

Content

Although information about the biology of the HIV virus, the signs and symptoms of AIDS, and the social and economic costs of the epidemic might be of interest, such information is not the essential knowledge that students must acquire in order to prevent becoming infected with HIV. Similarly, a single film, lecture, or school assembly about HIV/AIDS will not be sufficient to assure that students develop the complex understanding and skills they will need to avoid becoming infected.

Schools should assure that students receive at least the essential information about HIV/AIDS as summarized in sequence on the following pages, for each of four grade-level ranges. The exact grades at which students receive this essential information should be determined locally, in accord with community and parental values. Because essential information for students at higher grades requires an understanding of information essential for students at lower grades, secondary school personnel will need to assure that students understand basic concepts before teaching more advanced information. Schools simultaneously should assure that students have opportunities to learn about emotional and social factors that influence types of behavior associated with HIV transmission.

Early Elementary School

Education about HIV/AIDS for students in early elementary grades principally should be designed to allay excessive fears of the epidemic and of becoming infected.

- *AIDS is a disease that is causing some adults to get very sick, but it does not commonly affect children.*
- *AIDS is very hard to get; you cannot get it just by being near or touching someone who has it.*
- *Scientists all over the world are working hard to find a way to stop people from getting AIDS and to cure those who have it.*

Late Elementary School

Education about HIV/AIDS for students in late elementary school grades should be designed with consideration for the following information.

- *Viruses are living organisms too small to be seen by the unaided eye.*
- *Viruses can be transmitted from an infected person to an uninfected person through various means.*
- *Persons who are infected with some viruses that cause disease may not have any signs or symptoms of disease.*
- *AIDS (an abbreviation for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is caused by a virus that weakens the ability of infected individuals to fight off disease.*
- *People who have AIDS often develop a rare type of severe pneumonia, a cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma, and certain other diseases that healthy people normally do not get.*
- *About 1 to 1.5 million of the total population of approximately 240 million Americans were infected with the HIV virus in 1986, and the number has and is growing rapidly, and these people are capable of infecting others.*
- *People who are infected with the HIV virus live in every state in the United States and in most other countries of the world. Infected people live in cities as well as in suburbs, small towns, and rural areas. Although most infected people are adults, teenagers can also become infected. Females as well as males are infected. People of every race are infected, including whites, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders.*
- *The HIV virus can be transmitted by sexual contact with an infected person; by using needles and other injection equipment that an infected person has used; from an infected mother to her infant before or during birth; and in some instances through blood transfusions.*
- *A small number of doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel have been infected when they were directly exposed to infected blood.*
- *It sometimes takes several years after becoming infected with the HIV virus before symptoms of the disease appear. Thus, people who are infected with the virus can infect other people - even though the people who transmit the infection do not feel or look sick.*
- *Most infected people who develop symptoms of AIDS only live about 2 years after their symptoms are diagnosed.*
- *The HIV virus cannot be caught by touching someone who is infected, by being in the same room with an infected person, or by donating blood.*

Middle School

Education about HIV/AIDS for students in the middle school grades should contain all of the information in the Late Elementary section above, as well as the following information.

- *The virus that causes AIDS, and other health problems, is called human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV.*
- *The risk of becoming infected with HIV can be virtually eliminated by not engaging in sexual activities and by not using illegal intravenous drugs.*
- *Although no transmission from deep, open-mouth (i.e., "French") kissing has been documented, such kissing theoretically could transmit HIV from an infected to an uninfected person through direct exposure of mucous membranes to infected blood or saliva.*
- *In the past, medical use of blood, such as transfusing blood and treating hemophiliacs with blood clotting products, has caused some people to become infected with HIV. However, since 1985 all donated blood has been tested to determine whether it is infected with HIV; moreover, all blood clotting products have been made from screened plasma which has been heated to destroy any HIV that might remain in the concentrate.*

Thus, the risk of becoming infected with HIV from blood transfusions and from blood clotting products has been virtually eliminated. Cases of HIV infection caused by these medical uses of blood will continue to be diagnosed, however, among people who were infected by these means before 1985.

- *Behavior that prevents exposure to HIV also may prevent unintended pregnancies and exposure to the organisms that cause Chlamydia infection, gonorrhea, herpes, human papillomavirus, and syphilis.*

Senior High School

Education about HIV/AIDS for students in senior high school grades should be developed and presented taking into consideration the following information.

- *The virus that causes AIDS and other health problems is called human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV.*
- *The risk of becoming infected with HIV can be virtually eliminated by not engaging in sexual activities and by not using illegal intravenous drugs.*
- *Sexual transmission of HIV is not a threat to those uninfected individuals who engage in mutually monogamous sexual relations during their lifetime.*
- *HIV may be transmitted in any of the following ways: a) by any sexual contact with an infected person, including anal and oral sex, b) by using needles or other injection equipment that an infected person has used, c) from an infected mother to her infant before or during birth.*
- *A small number of doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel have been infected when they were directly exposed to infected blood.*
- *The following are at increased risk of having the virus that causes AIDS and consequently of being infectious: a) persons with clinical or laboratory evidence of infection, b) persons who engage in homosexual activities, c) persons who have injected illegal drugs, d) persons who have had numerous sexual partners, including male or female prostitutes, e) persons who received blood clotting products before 1985, f) sex partners of infected persons or persons at increased risk, and g) infants born to infected mothers.*
- *The risk of becoming infected is increased by having a sexual partner who is at increased risk of having contracted the HIV virus (as identified previously, practicing sexual behavior that results in the exchange of bodily fluids (i.e., semen, vaginal secretions, blood) and using unsterile needles or paraphernalia to inject drugs.*
- *Although no transmission from deep, open-mouth (i.e., "French") kissing has been documented, such kissing, theoretically, could transmit HIV from an infected to an uninfected person through direct exposure of mucous membranes to infected blood or saliva.*
- *In the past, medical use of blood, such as transfusing blood and treating hemophiliacs with blood clotting products, has caused some people to become infected with HIV. However, since 1985 all donated blood has been tested to determine whether it is infected with HIV; moreover, all blood clotting products have been made from screened plasma and have been heated to destroy any HIV that might remain in the concentrate. Thus, the risk of becoming infected with HIV from blood transfusions and from blood clotting products is virtually eliminated. Cases of HIV infection caused by these medical uses of blood will continue to be diagnosed, however, among people who were infected by these means before 1985.*
- *Persons who continue to engage in sexual intercourse with persons who are at increased risk or whose infection status is unknown should use a latex condom (not natural membrane) to reduce the likelihood of becoming infected. Although a latex condom with a spermicide provides only some protection, it provides the best protection for people who do not maintain*

a mutually monogamous lifetime relationship with an uninfected partner.

- *Behavior that prevents exposure to HIV also may prevent unintended pregnancies and exposure to the organisms that cause Chlamydia infection, gonorrhea, herpes, human papillomavirus, and syphilis.*
- *Persons who believe they may be infected with HIV should take precautions not to infect others and to seek counseling and antibody testing to determine whether they are infected. If persons are not infected, counseling and testing can relieve unnecessary anxiety and reinforce the need to adopt or continue practices that reduce the risk of infection. If persons are infected, they should a) take precautions to protect sexual partners from becoming infected, b) advise previous and current sexual or drug-use partners to receive counseling and testing, c) take precautions against becoming pregnant, and d) seek medical care and counseling about other medical problems that may result from a weakened immunologic system.*

Epilog

Following HIV/AIDS instruction, the student will

- AVOID a sexual life style that would cause exposure to the HIV virus
- AVOID the use of intravenous drugs
- BE ALERT to one's health status relative to AIDS and seek medical adviceif exposure to the HIV virus is suspected
- AVOID exposing others and follow the physician's directions if an HIV infection is suspected or diagnosed
- BE HELPFUL to and supportive of a friend who has AIDS
- BE AN ADVOCATE of HIV/AIDS education, of AIDS research and health care, and of the rights of persons infected with the HIV virus
- SERVE as a resource for accurate information and advice concerning AIDS.

In reviewing these behaviors, one can see how accurate information, appropriate attitudes, and direct action are all necessary components in an HIV/AIDS education curriculum. If these behaviors are practiced, then much progress can be made in reducing the spread of AIDS.

New Plymouth is a diverse yet conservative community. The aim of the HIV/AIDS education program is to adequately educate the student within the framewoork of community values.

It is our aim to assure that students receive at least the essential information about HIV/AIDS for each of teh grade level ranges. This must recognize community and parental values, while giving students all the tools they need to combat HIV infection, but not so much as to be familiar with specific practices.

SPECIFICALLY, IN THE CLASSROOM, THE TEACHER WILL

a) be careful to make sure that questions are clearly stated and clearly answered
b) be careful not to let the situation get out of control
c) be careful to place emphasis on positive self-concept and self-worth, and to also emphasize that students do not have to yield to peer pressure
d) keep abreast of current information regarding HIV/AIDS
e) give current, factual information, but not detailed descriptions of controversial sexual practices.

Curriculum Selection

Curriculum and curricular materials will be measured and selected using this Framework as the standard. Significant deviations from the Framework must be cleared by the Sensitive Areas Curriculum Committee.

Parents

The District Newsletter will be used to inform parents of pending instruction in HIV/AIDS, to give them an opportunity to talk to the teacher individually regarding any questions, or to have their child excused from the instruction.

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